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**From Management Institutes to Business Schools – An Indian Journey**

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# FROM MANAGEMENT INSTITUTES TO BUSINESS SCHOOLS – AN INDIAN JOURNEY

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## Changing times

There have been considerable changes in management education since the advent of economic liberalization and the opening up of the Indian economy in the early 1990s. The changes have been marked by the rapid in

were at the start of the decade of the 1990s. This trend has been particularly strong in the case of

only industry and commerce) into modernity (Burnham 1941). Little wonder then, it was the Government of India that took the initiatives to set up the first big management institutes in the country with help from Ford Foundation and the best known US business schools at Harvard and MIT.

Despite the basic agenda of nation building which necessitated the creation of these institutes, it emulated the US curriculum and pedagogy it

to validating western theories with local data. Most research in management degenerated into mechanical and often shallow empiricism. The requirement that a faculty member was fit to participate in academia was measured by the number of publications. Further, if one had publications in western journals it was deemed better than if one published in local ones. Some schools stopped recruiting faculty who did not possess foreign degrees.

Needless to add, the governance of these institutions changed too. The new expectation was that faculty members performed in terms of some measurable criteria and if they did well they would be rewarded monetarily beyond their (quite handsome by Indian standards) salaries. The western model of corporate incentives was introduced in many management schools, and rewards beyond salary were based on measured academic performance. In the discourse of this particular sector of higher education, the term management institutes became less frequently used, and the term business schools gained ascendancy. The older and more nuanced distinction between the two got blurred.

Another major change in the external environment of management institutes that had an enormous impact was the introduction of evaluations made by impact pA .4(emic)JJ/TT11Tf3.31150TD0Tc@003Tj/TT21Tf.43

Another echo that came from western business schools was about climate change and environmental sustainability. The ranking and accreditation agencies started looking for “sustainability” in the curricula. Hence again many schools just added a course on sustainability where the essence of the concept was to be able to align sustainability goals as a component of overall business strategy and the term sustainable growth was used as a business goal. It is not easily realized that sustainable growth is a contradiction in terms – nothing physical can grow indefinitely. Hence whatever environmental management can be done has to be done in terms of the existing institutions of economy and society. It is easier to talk about the possible death of the planet rather than any sustainable alternative to the existing economic and social system.

### **Globalized wisdom**

During the past two decades or more, the resurgence of faith in markets has led to viewing the business environment as a hostile hyper competitive space where the most ruthless and the fittest survive at the expense of all others. Competition is about survival, not success. The teaching of such perspectives leads to a disconnection from what is believed to be of self interest on the one hand and issues of morality or ethics on the other, in the context of doing business embedded in a society with many other problems of lives and livelihoods. However, an organization that looks at itself alone, without the interconnections with other organizations and the environment, necessarily ends up destroying itself or the entire environment (Descheres: 2014). Students seldom get to see (or are encouraged to see) that business is part of a more complex interdependent eco system where collective well being is essential to individual survival. Indeed, the dominant view of business and its underlying philosophy is often dished out to students as the only available model (there is no alternative or TINA) and students as potential change agents are discouraged from questioning the existing state of affairs and searching for creative alternatives.

There leaves little space for students to find their own meanings or develop an ability to critique existing habits of mind. Learning becomes a mode of control rather than a search for meaning. As teachers we often end up transmitting unquestioned attitudes, norms and beliefs. The conventionally accepted definitions about what constitutes work, play, achievement, success, failure are all socially constructed categories that carry the weight of particular social interests. The failure of curriculum builders to realize that there are fundamental interests of knowledge other than prediction, control and efficiency is a serious political and ethical lapse (Giroux: 1988).

An appreciation of the latest technologies and how they could be manipulated for business gains is deeply ingrained in the curricula. The omnipotence of technology is taken as a matter of faith. Hence clean technology will make the world sustainable and one does not need to think about changing the business as usual model with carbon

Hence in terms of





In conclusion, the path of management education in India has closely

Noble, D. (1997): "Let them Eat Skills" in H. Giroux and P.